

Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace the paragraph, beginning at page 4, line 2, with the following rewritten paragraph:

At its end remote from the ball 25, the tie rod 23 has a threaded shank 27 which is engaged by screwing in a female thread 28 formed in a knob 29. The rotation of the knob 29 in the two senses causes the tie rod 23 to tighten or slacken, respectively. A plug 30 is inserted in the end of the stem 11 corresponding to the knob 29 and a self-locking nut 31 is screwed onto the threaded shank 27 to abut the plug 30, with the interposition of a Belleville washer 33. A friction load is thus provided in the first and second ball and socket joints, independently of the slackening or removal of the knob 29 from the shank 27, that is, when the tie rod 23 is slackened, so as to secure the photographic apparatus A mounted on the orientable platform against abrupt oscillations and impacts resulting from such slackening.

Please replace the paragraph, beginning at page 4, line 14, with the following rewritten paragraph:

The sliding of the pillar 12 in the seat 4 can be stopped in an adjustable position by a brake 35, for example, of the type with a screw-operated block mounted on the spider 3 and operable by a hand wheel, or by the devices provided for in the Applicant's Italian patent application No. PD98A000096, and also as shown in U.S. Patent No. 6,164,843.